



**CHCC** COLLEGE OF  
HEALTH CARE  
CHAPLAINS



## **Unite the Union Consultation Response to:** **RCVS Proposal for a new Royal Charter**

**This response is submitted by Unite. Unite is the UK's largest trade union with 1.5 million members across the private and public sectors. The union's members work in a range of industries including manufacturing, financial services, print, media, construction, transport, local government, education, health and not for profit sectors.**

Unite represents in excess of 100,000 health sector workers. This includes eight professional associations - British Veterinary Union (BVU), College of Health Care Chaplains (CHCC), Community Practitioners and Health Visitors' Association (CPHVA), Guild of Healthcare Pharmacists (GHP), Hospital Physicists Association (HPA), Medical Practitioners Union (MPU), Mental Health Nurses Association (MNHA), Society of Sexual Health Advisers (SSHA).

Unite also represents members in occupations such as allied health professions, healthcare science, applied psychology, counselling and psychotherapy, dental professions, audiology, optometry, building trades, estates, craft and maintenance, administration, ICT, support services and ambulance services.

The British Veterinary Union in Unite (BVU) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation on *Proposals for a new Royal Charter*.

In order to formulate this response, the BVU has used its ongoing routes throughout the organisation to hear back the views of our members who are registered with the RCVS and these have informed our response. The BVU would like to bring the following points to the attention of the RCVS:

- The RCVS was not successful in convincing the government to legislate a new Veterinary Surgeons Act (VSA), but has since managed to introduce highly significant new regulations in terms of Health Protocols, Performance Protocols and revised Codes of Conduct, for both Veterinary Surgeons and Veterinary Nurses. Our members consider that the RCVS needs to explain that it is trying to secure proxy over-arching powers through a new Royal Charter rather than seeking a renewed mandate with parliamentary scrutiny through a new VSA and that it has not given up on seeking a new VAS.
- The RCVS was not successful in convincing MPs to introduce a private members bill in parliament to seek legal protection of the Veterinary Nurse title. Whereas the BVU fully supports every effort to get legal recognition of the Veterinary Nursing profession and protection of the Veterinary Nurse title, our members consider it is necessary for the RCVS to make it clear that although the new Royal Charter will enable the RCVS to regulate veterinary nurses, it will not dispense the need for statutory recognition of the veterinary nursing profession and protection of the Veterinary Nurse title. Our members call on the RCVS to indicate that it has not given up on pursuing these objectives.
- As has been pointed out above, the RCVS appears to have had no difficulty in introducing highly significant new regulations relating to veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses

without a new VSA or a new Royal Charter. With or without a new Royal Charter, it is highly likely that the RCVS will continue to devise new instruments to regulate veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses. Therefore, rather than seeking further powers to regulate already regulated veterinary professionals, the RCVS needs to secure authority to regulate the unregulated non-veterinary owners of veterinary businesses, which the veterinary profession has been calling for loud and clear for quite some time now. The BVU urges the RCVS to *explicitly and unambiguously* seek such powers through the new Charter and subsequently through a new VSA. Our members consider that it is important that the RCVS does not miss this opportunity and are concerned about the prospect of further alienating already unhappy veterinary professionals.

- By seeking mandate through the proposed new Royal Charter, the RCVS wishes to enter into an uncharted territory of “Promoting the resolution of disputes between registered persons and their clients”. In view of the fact that the RCVS seems to be finding it difficult to implement certain requirements of the veterinary surgeons code of conduct, 24-hour cover for example, our members do not consider it is right for the RCVS to embark on financial matters of the veterinary business – potentially the most likely cause of client-vet disputes. Our members suggest this is stepping outside the domain of professional responsibilities and such work would prove to be enormously complex, (especially in view of non-veterinary business giants running veterinary businesses), highly expensive to operate and for which ordinary veterinary surgeons and nurses will have to foot the bill. In view of these observations, the BVU urges the RCVS to drop this clause from the proposed new Royal Charter.
- In view of the recent history of the RCVS failing to convince parliamentarians to introduce a private members bill regarding the veterinary nursing profession, and a failure to convince the ministers of a need for the revision of the VSA, the BVU fears that if the RCVS has not

done the right ground work before proposing the new Royal Charter, the UK veterinary profession may face problems from which it may take a long time to recover.

**This response is submitted on behalf of The British Veterinary Union (BVU) by:**

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**Chair, BVU Organising Professional Committee**

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